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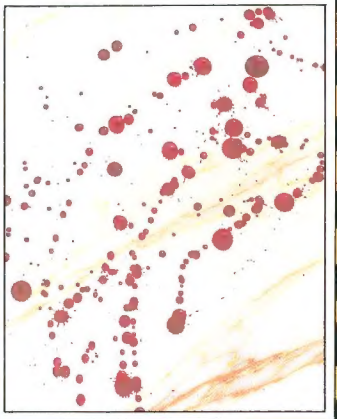
# CEREBUS

## mothers & daughters

33

$2.25USA • $2.75CANADA • £1.25UK

ENDGAME



183
JUN

# NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Viktor Davis sat poised at his typewriter. He thought again of . . .

Ahem. Sorry about that.

This one is a bit more advanced again, intended for the once and future 'next *Bone*' folks. It is the single greatest benefit that self-publishing has ever experienced that all levels of the direct market are actively seeking the 'next *Bone*'. The greatest problem that a self-publishing creator whose book is 'taking off' is going to experience is cash flow problems. The money that comes in on your most recent issue ends up being less than the amount you need to live on and to pay your next printing bill. Even if you can get on top of the printing bill situation, once you get up around issue 5 or 6, the earlier issues are running low and you face the problem of going back to press, printing issue 7 at the same time that you have to do second printings of issues 1 and 2. Suddenly you have to pay three printing bills in one month just when your book is starting to be profitable. The best advice is to make some sort of arrangement with your printer or the bank where you do business. The major strength of the direct market is still the non-returnability of the books sold (this assumes you are shipping on schedule, which you should be). When you get your orders in, use them as direct evidence of your viability. Show your printer. Here, I will have this much money coming in in thirty days, guaranteed. Ask for thirty day terms or a mix of a down payment on the printing job (most printers have to pay in advance for their paper, which is their largest concern when it comes to extending credit) and the balance payable in 30 days. A sympathetic bank is another option. If you can explain to them how the direct market works, the non-returnability especially, it is not outside of the range of possibilities that they will give you a line of credit or a revolving loan. Essentially, the bank just guarantees your cheques up to a fixed amount — in the case of a self-publisher, a few thousand dollars is all that's required. You don't borrow the money, it's just a safety net that is there as required. The bank will monitor how much of it you use, how long it takes you to 'make good' on your overdrafts and how your account is doing when the cash flow tides are 'in'. If you maintain a balance between two and three thousand (say) that slips a thousand into the 'red' for thirty days or sixty days and then rebounds up to four thousand — well, that's just the sort of thing that banks like very much to see. I most recently recommended this to Teri Wood (hi, Teri) who definitely has the pole position in the 'next *Bone*' derby. Her cash flow isn't the best right now, but she has received something like two hundred fan letters from around the world in a period of a few weeks. I suggested that she take a box of them to the bank with her along with her Capital and Diamond purchase orders. I would *assume* that a bank official with a bit of vision (there are some, there are some) could look at the two together and figure that a small line of credit wouldn't be a misplaced investment. Letters from as far away as the UK, Australia, Singapore, deepest darkest Canada etc. etc. are worth a shot. Always lead with your best shot.

**********

I remember James Owen feeling quite put out when his Diamond orders were coming in at a fraction of his Capital orders. This is not unusual. Diamond is in a very dominant position and the 'next *Bone*' syndrome cuts two ways. No one (or very few people) were in on *Bone* at the beginning. Andromeda was, the Silver Snail, a handful of others. Now, of course, virtually every distribution outlet and retail store is doing very well with Jeff's book. For the aggressive ones, this tells them that there's a great deal to recommend looking for, supporting, and making the 'next *Bone*' happen. For the passive ones, they can afford to sit and wait until it is happening and then jump on the bandwagon (usually wearing an 'I was Here First' t-shirt). The same Andromeda that supported Bone from the beginning didn't carry *Cerebus* until around issue nine. Harry Kremer who was the only Canadian retailer to buy the first issue (bless 'im) was told by Ron 'let me know when he goes to colour.' To say I was determined to force Andromeda to carry *Cerebus* would be an understatement. My molars ached. I stayed in the game, I put the books out on schedule and made it impossible for Andromeda to *not* carry *Cerebus*. If one or both large distributors won't carry your book or if you get pitifully small orders from them, the ball is in your court. You have to put together a network of stores, subscriptions and individual sales and put your nose to the grindstone for months or even years until you can prove them wrong. If you can't sell enough copies with a colour cover on newsprint, then you go to a mini-comic format and build interest and attention there by putting the book out regularly and getting better. Remember there are a lot of ballplayers who are drafted pretty high and still spend years in the minors before they're 'called up'. The ones who don't want it badly enough quit. The ones who want it badly enough play their hearts out game after game for months or even years on end.

How badly do you want it?


CEREBUS

NO. 183 JUNE 1994

**DAVE SIM**
President

**GERHARD**
Vice-President

**LINDA BERZINS**
Typesetting


**MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS**
a novel

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**BOOK ONE**
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
**Flight**

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**BOOK TWO**
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
**Women**

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**BOOK THREE**
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 186)
**Reads**

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**BOOK FOUR**
(Cerebus 187 to Cerebus 200)


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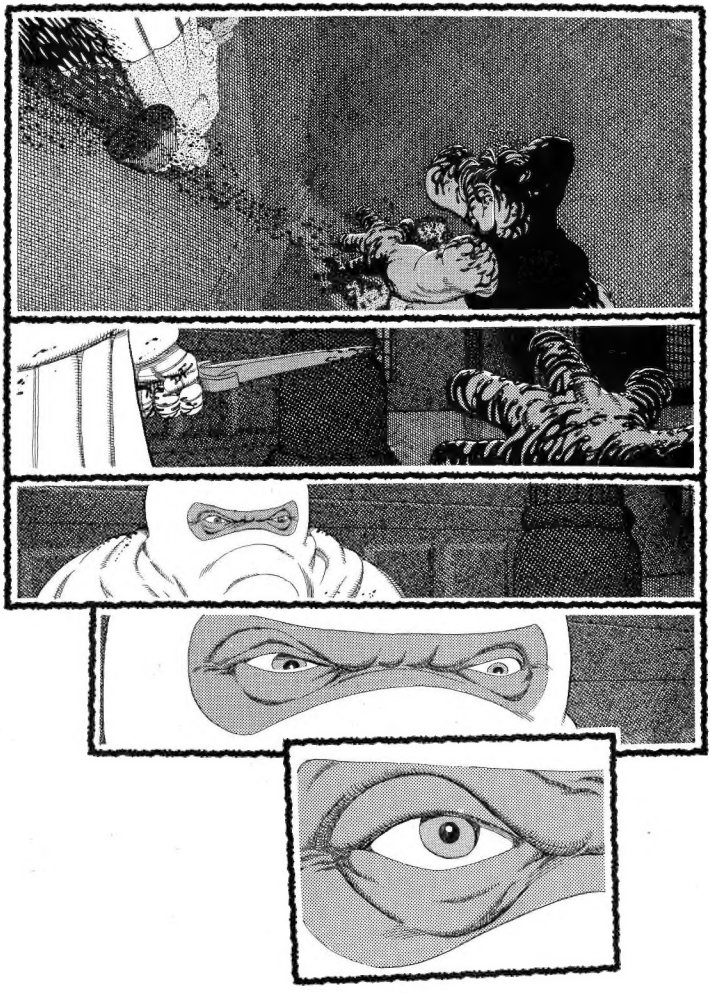

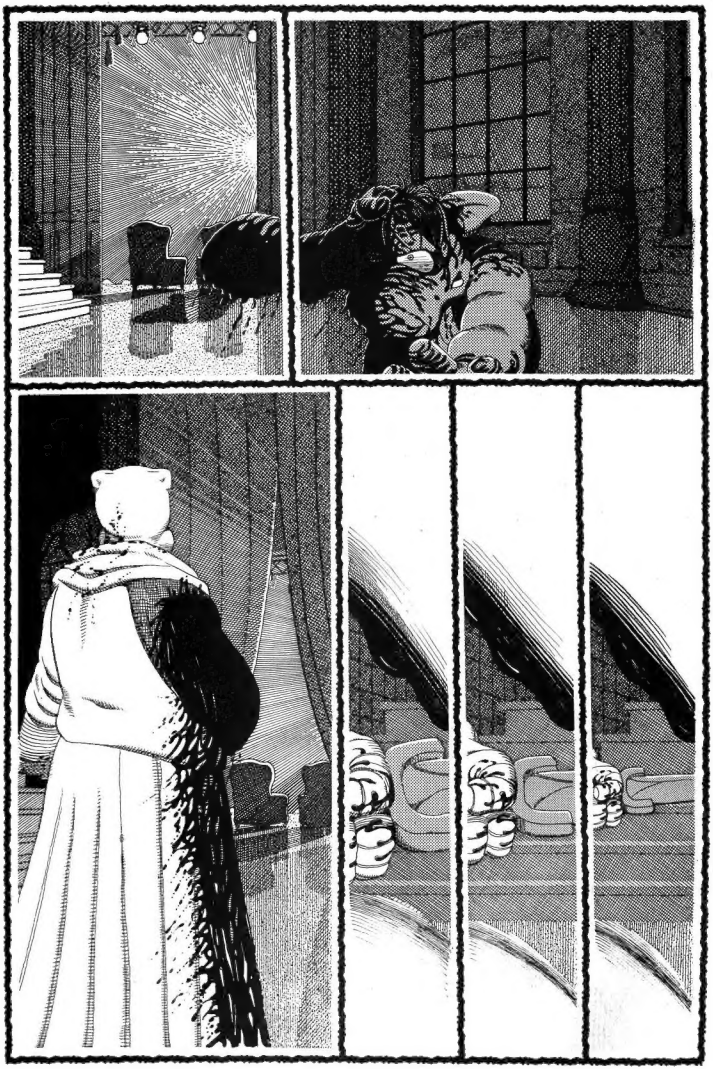

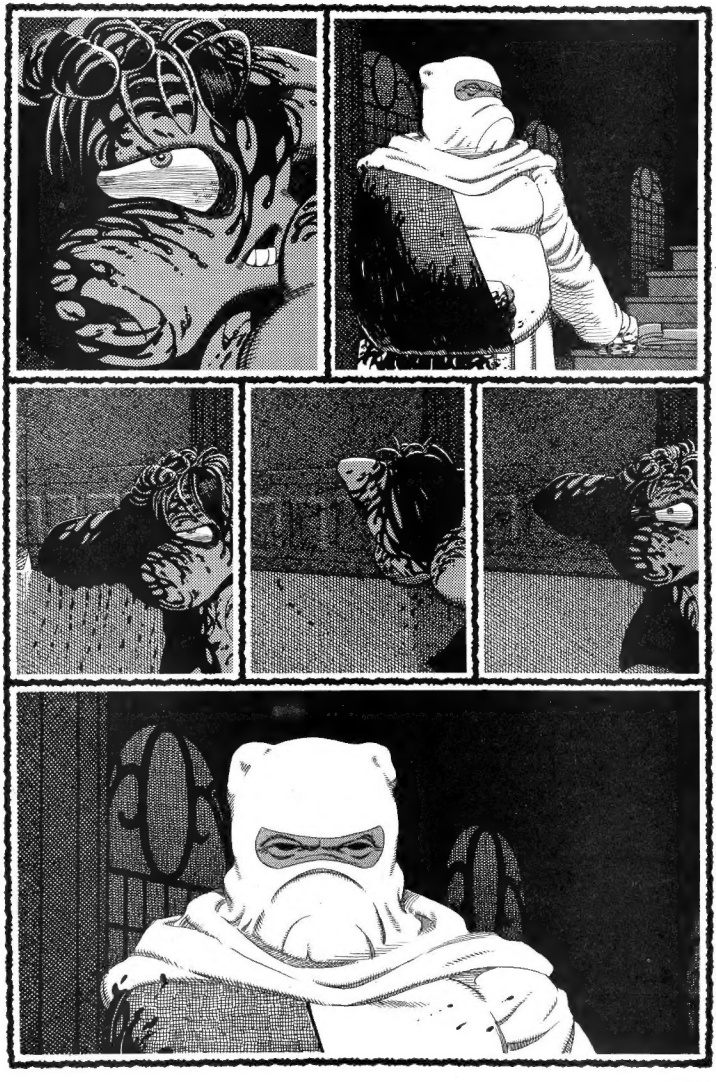

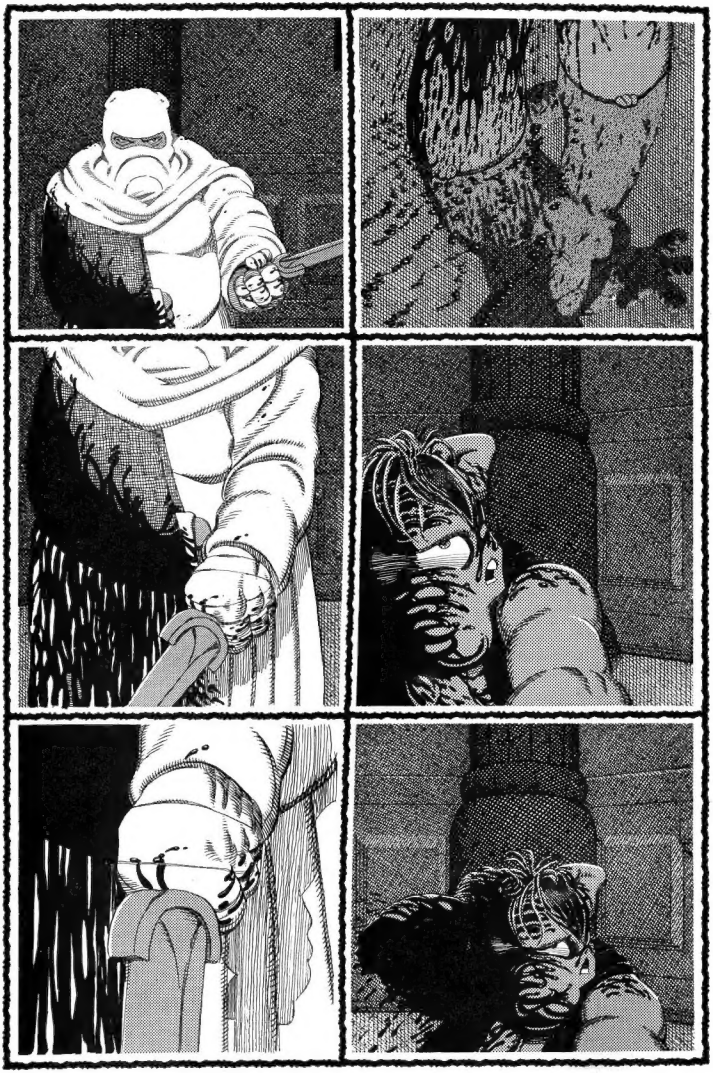

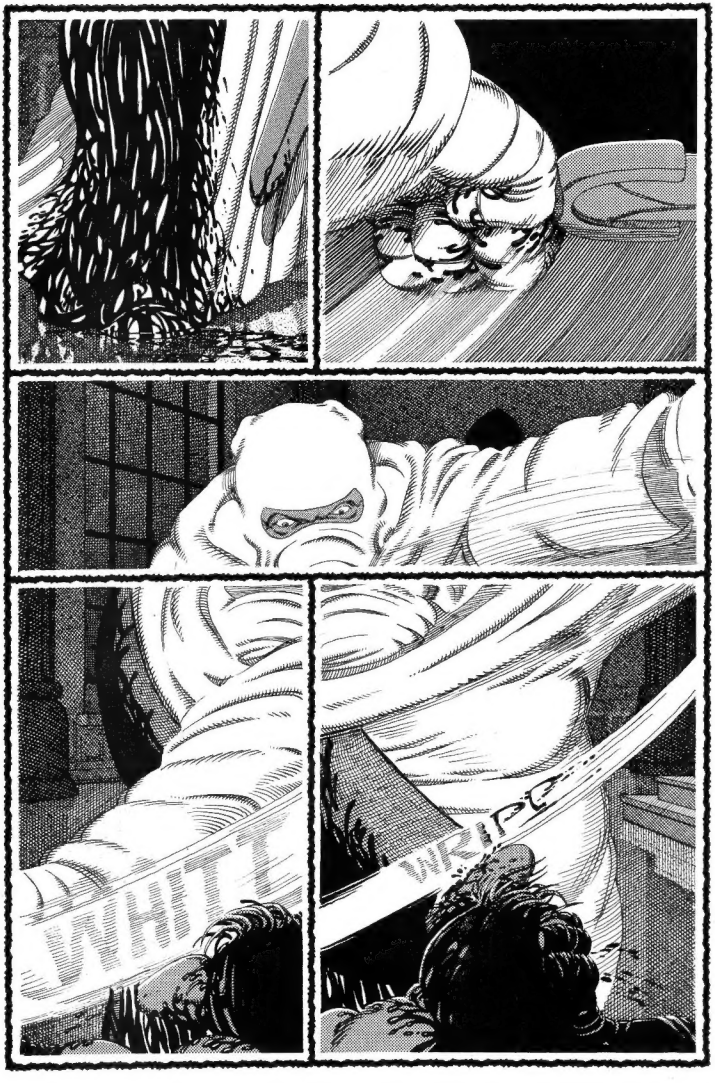
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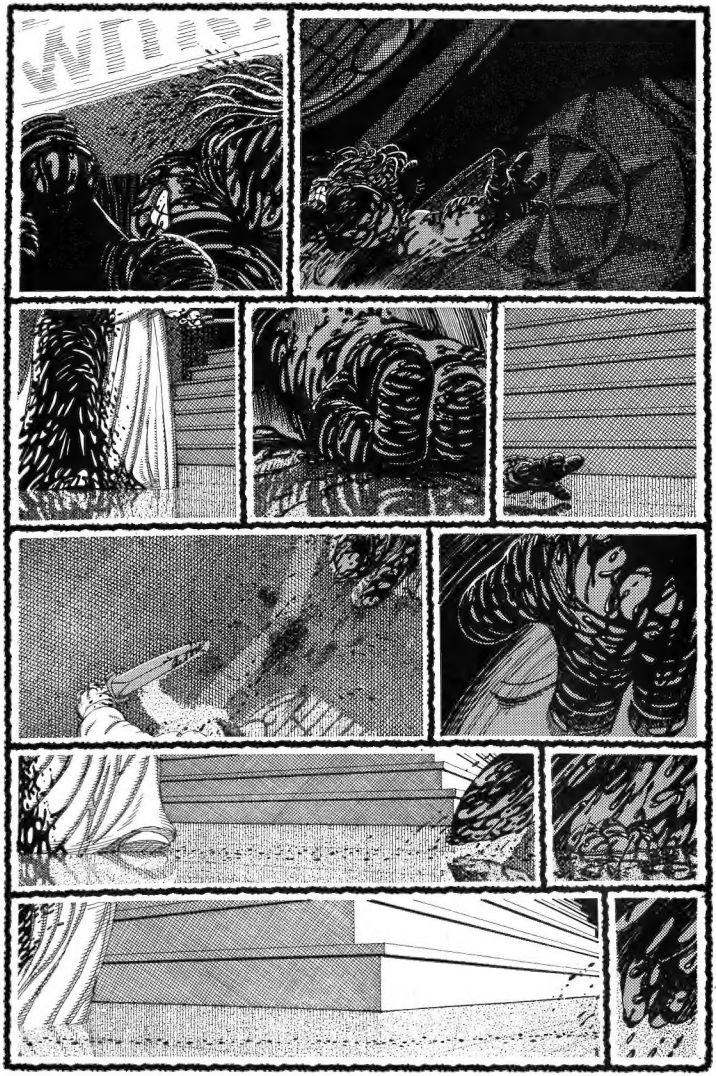
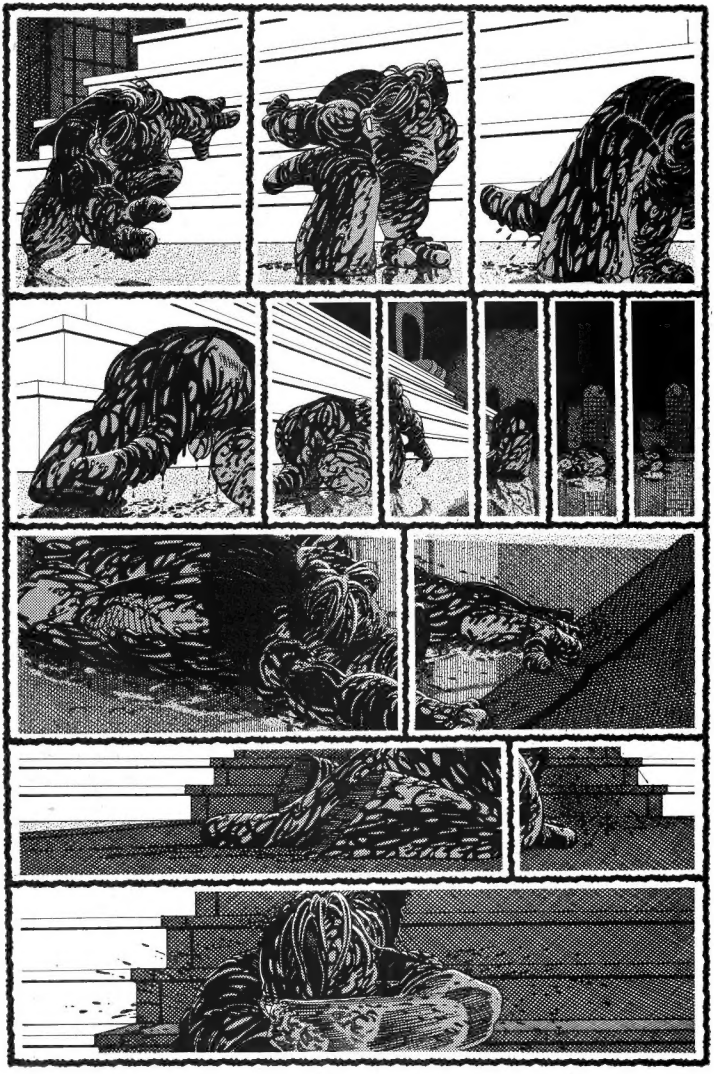
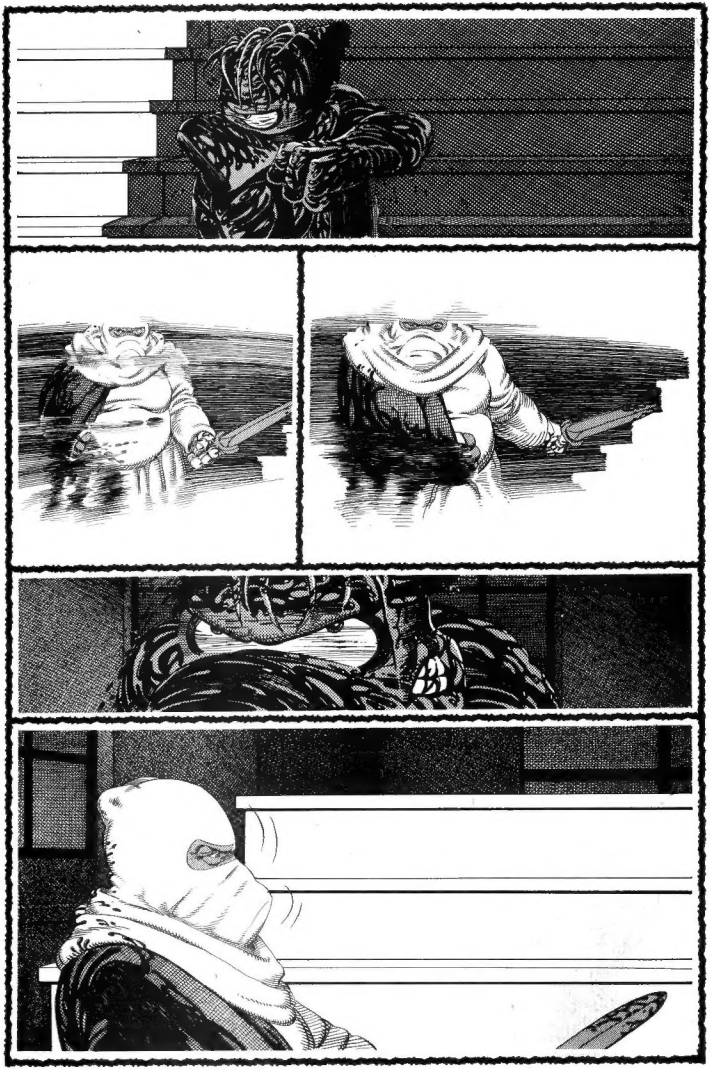
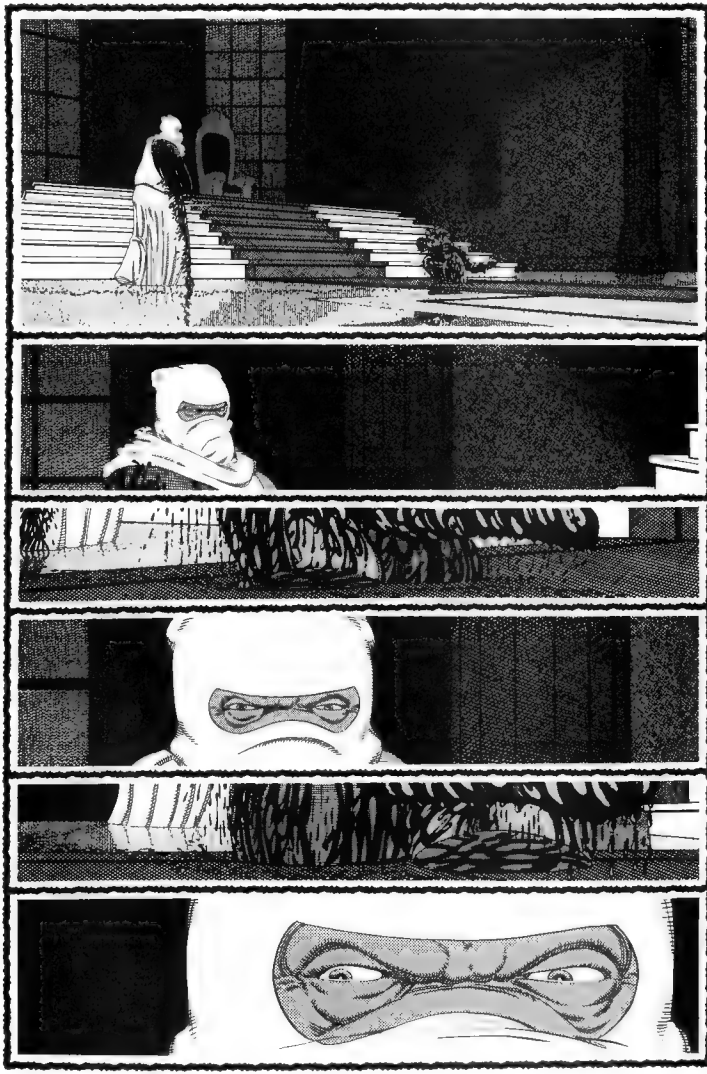
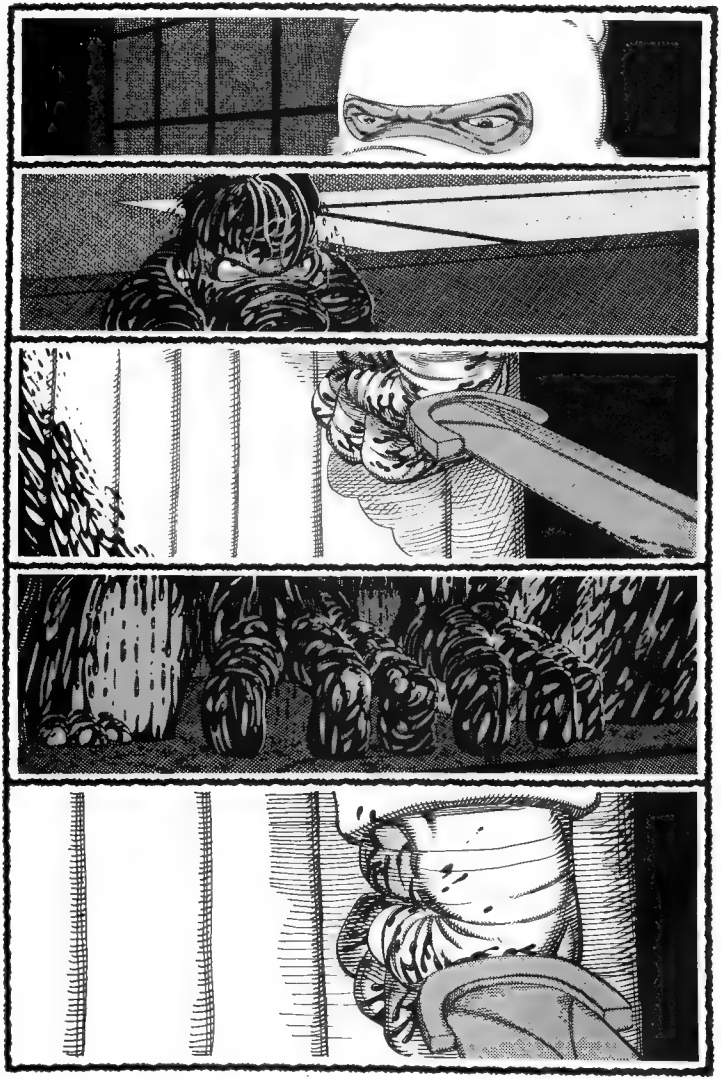
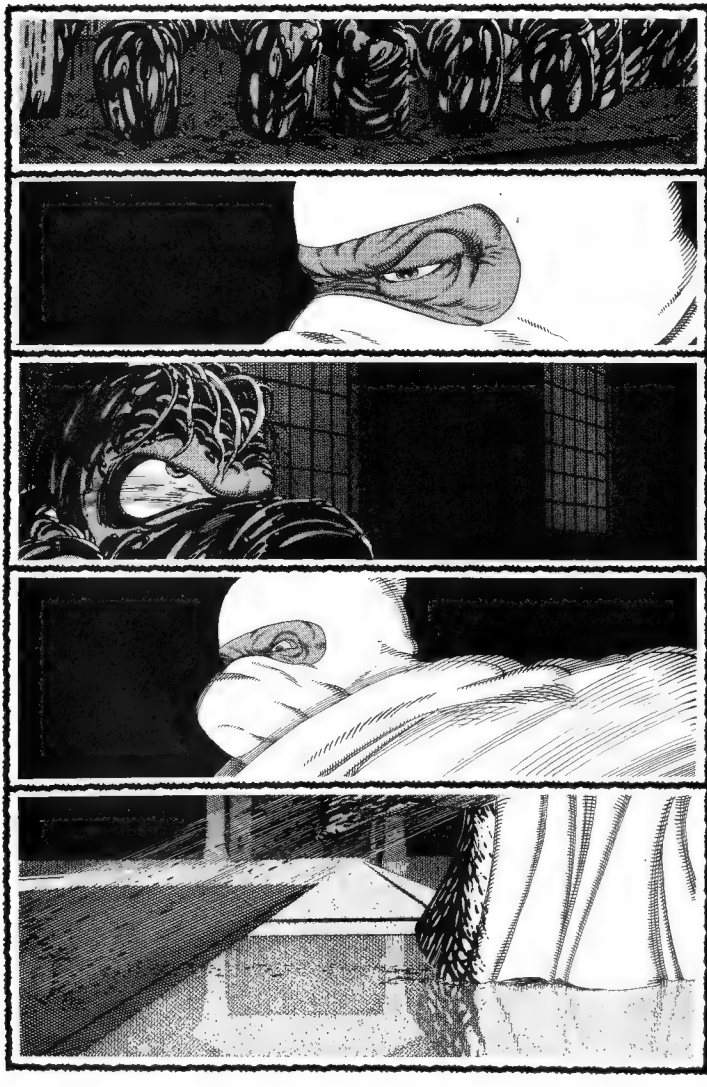


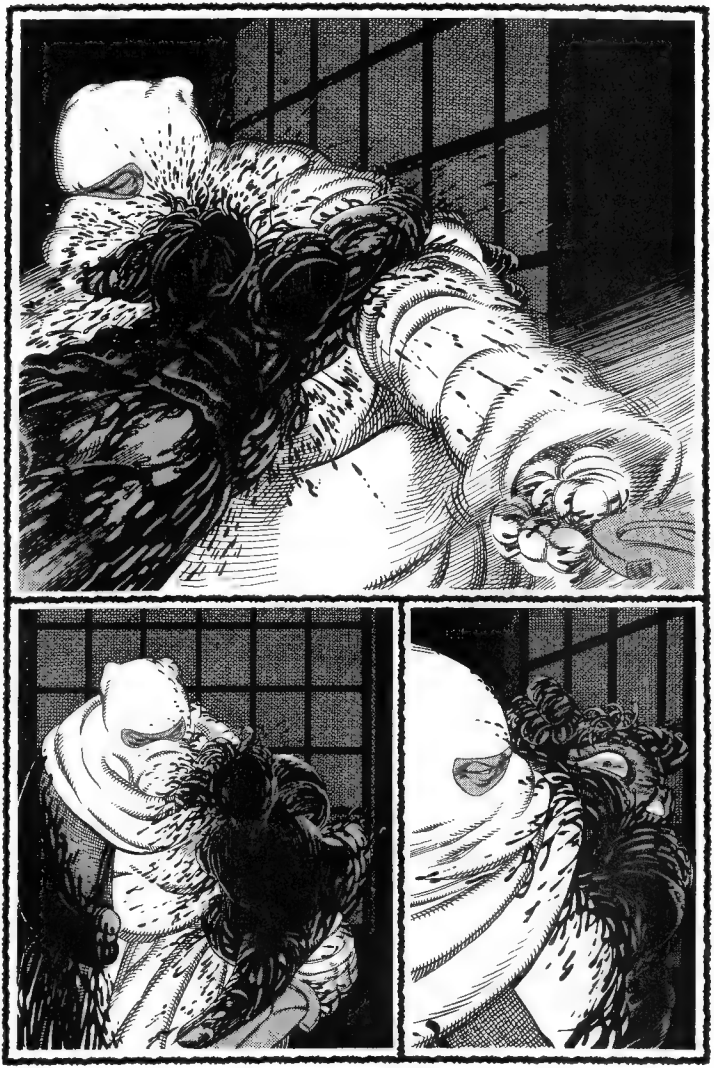


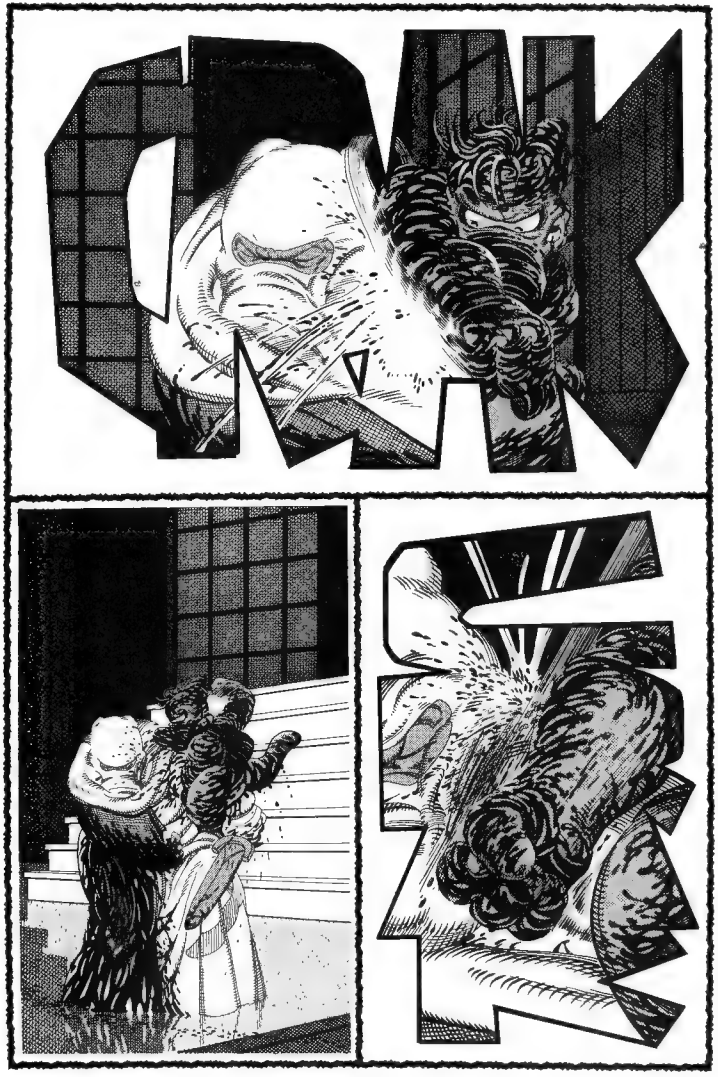











CRACK

The distant white spotlight dimmed slowly, gathering its radiance to itself, drawing that radiance relentlessly inward. The white became less pure, scintillating with spikes of colour: dagger points of red and yellow and blue which pierced the darkness. Presently, these abbreviated themselves into hard needles which conducted a single wave of prismatic perfection about the circumference of the yellowing circle.

And then the light was gone.

All was darkness then. The reader remained motionless for a time, reflecting on Viktor Davis' strange words. We're getting much closer together now, he had said: Viktor Davis, the reader and the story. The reader had felt a peculiar rush of air as the curtains had parted, a strange sense of disorientation as the reader watched Cirin watching the back of the reader's chair. The intensity of Cirin's gaze had been a terrible thing to experience. It was as if everything in her path — the very molecules of the air — grew heavier, denser, within the field of her vision. Even at a distance of dozens of meters, even through the substance of the chair, there had been a crushing, oppressive force exerted upon the reader. The reader shuddered at the memory.

Some time passed. The reader blinked several times, turning this way and that, attempting (visually) to adjust to the pervasive surrounding gloom. The darkness was complete, impenetrable. The reader raised a hand and passed it rapidly in front of the reader's eyes at a distance of an inch or two (or not — where there is no light, movement becomes a matter of faith). The reader returned the hand to its place on the arm of the chair, only now the arm itself seemed less substantial. The hand seemed to be resting on something which was without discernible texture.

There's . . . *some*thing there, Neil Gaiman had said; or, rather, that was what Viktor Davis had *said* Neil Gaiman had said. All stories are true, Alan Moore had said; or, rather, that was what Viktor Davis had *said* Alan Moore had said.

More time passed. The reader waited for something to happen, some word to be spoken; the reader waited for the light to return; the reader waited for some sign, some new reality, invoked by words or an image rendered in Gerhard-thin pen strokes, to present itself.

And still more time passed.

At last the reader stood up from the chair as if the gesture itself might remind someone, somewhere, of the reader's existence.

Some vital link had been severed and the reader had a sense of vulnerability which the reader found inexplicable. Thinking became a chore. The flotsam and jetsam of Viktor Davis' recent monologue swam in and out of the dark waters of the reader's awareness: the cookies on the plate at Viktor's grandparents' house in Pebble Beach (or whatever it was called; it was something like that, the reader was certain). Was that true? Had Viktor Davis really lost a year and some months of his life? All stories are true, Viktor Davis had said Alan Moore had said.

More time passed and the reader grew tired of standing. The reader sighed (at least the reader thought it was a sigh — no sound was discernible) and turned to brace a hand against the armchair and resume a sitting position.

The chair was gone.

The reader waved a hand in the enfolding gloom, undulating it slowly in the vicinity of the chair's former position, seeking the arms, the back, the seat. The reader stretched forward, fingers splayed, endeavouring to widen the parameters of exploration. The reader shuffled a few steps in the direction of Viktor Davis' chair. Baby steps. The reader had no urge to bark a shin against something (what?) in the darkness. There was nothing there. *Vertigo Horse*, the reader thought and then wondered why the name of Victor Reid's publishing company had crossed the reader's mind. Vertigo Horse. All stories are true. The cookies are for Santa Claus.

The reader thought of sensory deprivation tanks and felt the first indications of butterflies rising within, taking vibratory flight . . . of course they weren't *really* (all stories are true) butterflies. The reader crouched down, seeking the floor with both hands. The left hand touched what felt to be flagstones or perhaps cobblestones. The right hand found hard, ribbed plastic, like a mat intended for overshoes. As the reader moved each hand in a wide arc, the textures changed. Warm metal, brick, wallpaper, splintered wood, industrial carpeting, lightly adhesive paper, cardboard. The reader stood once more.

More time passed.

The surrounding air began to cool, as if night were falling. The reader felt (and attempted to suppress) increasing anxiety.

'Viktor? Viktor Davis?'

There was no sound. The reader spoke (or it felt like speech, anyway). The reader's lips had moved (or had they?), there had been a slight expulsion of air (or had there?), but the reader's ears had heard nothing. Perhaps . . .

Perhaps the reader had gone deaf. Perhaps the reader had gone blind.

Instinctively, the reader raised hands to ears, but a curious thing transpired. The reader *felt* the hands rising against some resistance in the air: some pressure which made the reader's arms feel heavy. The hands seemed to be rising and then they felt insubstantial. The hands were rising and they were also limp at the reader's sides. The rising hands felt *less* real and the limp hands felt *more* real, until it was uncertain if the hands had ever moved at all. Every part of the reader's body was numb: numbness of the kind which is experienced after the pins-and-needles sensation when an appendage falls asleep. Of course, they aren't *really* (all stories are true) pins and needles and appendages don't *actually* (all stories are true) fall asleep. It felt a little like flu symptoms as well. There was a sort of giddiness in the reader's joints; all of the reader's nerve endings seemed too sensitive, too exposed; too raw. Any attempted movement multiplied the sensation. When the reader didn't attempt to move, the sensation went away. *Vertigo Horse*, the reader thought again, suppressing a giggle which washed uncomfortably over the reader's spine, like a wire brush across an eyelid. The reader tried rubbing right thumb and index finger together. The nerve endings rebelled against this, as well. It felt as if the index finger and thumb were rubbing against something, but it did not feel as if they were rubbing against each other. Each digit might has been a fully autonomous being, divided one from the other by a distance of many miles, the sensation of touching, itself, as unverifiable as telepathy.

Was the theatre still there? This the reader did not know. The reader attempted a shouted greeting. This time, apart from a discomfiting tremor in the vicinity of the reader's jaw muscles, there was no sensation of the lips having moved, no sensation of air being expelled from the lungs.

And there was no sound.

If the theatre *was* there, were the twenty thousand seats empty or full? The reader felt a sudden certainty that the theatre patrons were all still there, that their experience mirrored the reader's own. There was darkness. There was immobility. Everything was insubstantial. All of them, all twenty thousand were just . . . waiting.

'Yes and no.'

It was Viktor Davis' voice, but it lacked any characteristic of sound. That is to say, the words were more vividly rendered than had been the stray thought moments before (*Vertigo Horse*). It was Viktor Davis' voice (wasn't it?), but it had made itself known to the reader's awareness by some manner of direct access which was not auditory in nature. The reader thought again of sensory deprivation tanks and hallucinations (all stories are true).

Pinpoints of light appeared, rising in straight lines from the reader's vantage point: like runway lights at an airport, as seen from a great distance. They delineated an inclined plane of some kind, brightening from orange to yellow to white. They reached an optimum level of brilliance, revealing row upon row of empty theatre seats. At the exact moment that the reader perceived this, the very instant that the lights changed from an inexplicable phenomenon and became, instead, theatre floor lights (all stories are true), they began to dim once more, from white to yellow to orange. And then they were gone and all was darkness once more.

Tap tap tap.

It was the soft impact of an index finger striking the reader's right temple. So unexpected, so genuine a sensory experience was this, so . . . *real* was this, by contrast with the impenetrable blackness and the reader's own benumbed senses, that the experience seemed to echo and reverberate in the reader's awareness, which (now focussed and acutely sensitive) replayed the experience, clinging to the sensation and the *memory* of the sensation as a drowning swimmer might cling to an overturned rowboat.

Tap tap tap.

Viktor Davis laughed.

'You're all in *there*, now.'

Nothing more was said, but this new intelligence created an effect within the reader. Claustrophobia, euphoria, anxiety. There was a sense of fragmentation. A babble of voices breached the reader's threshold of perception. It was uncertain if these were conversations or overlapping monologues. As certain voices rose (swimming up from the depths of the reader's awareness) and then fell (sinking

downward into incoherence, where little could be discerned beyond inflection and rhythm), bold strokes of green and turquoise leapt into being: a pattern like wallpaper, human faces visible as ghost images swam through the space between reader and pattern. The pattern receded, replicating itself. Sentence fragments, some typewritten, some handwritten, some represented in computer typefaces, interposed themselves between the reader and the translucent visages. '. . . Why not use gold logo #0's for something worthwhile like a $25 bid contributed to the defense fund . . .' 'Dear Viktor: I know, I know. You're asking yourself the same question I am: why bother? Why does he bother sending me this stuff? . . . ' '. . . boy meets girl by invading her homeland castle . . .' '. . . I know the parallels don't leap right out at you, but your focussed and positive thinking . . .' '. . . one reader who will not leave his seat until the show is over . . .' '. . . about your funny English words. In Poland where I come from, the word *cunt* means a pleat in a pair of trousers . . .'

The receding pattern revealed itself to be the cover to *Cerebus* 181. As it receded, as the cover became visible in its entirety, the overlapping layers of faces and words became too small to distinguish one from another. The babble of voices subsided entirely as the cover receded still further, growing smaller and smaller. The faces and the words began to resemble the rings of Saturn, locked in a slow orbit about the gleaming green rectangle and the smaller white square it contained. The cover hung suspended in the distance, as if it were a solitary picture in some otherworldly exhibition, brightly lit by some indirect and invisible light source.

All else was blackness and silence.

The reader continued to gaze at the distant image, hypnotised by it. After a time, the 'rings' were visible only when viewed indirectly: at the periphery of the reader's field of vision.

Something struck the reader's arm. The reader felt the grip of a hand, briefly, on the reader's left bicep. Then the hand seemed to be wrenched away. Flailing fingertips brushed the reader's collarbone. A silhouette of a figure eclipsed the brilliant green of the illuminated cover. The figure turned this way and that, revealing an animated profile in one instant and a symmetrical page-boy hairstyle in the next. The features were strangely familiar: the voice even more so.

'What — ah say — what was that? Who's there? Somebody — ah say — somebody put on the night-light. This joke has gone too far — crossed the boundary, that is. Ah demand mah full rights under the Alan Moore amendment. Ahm a *story*, son — y'can't destroy me . . . *obliterate*, that is.'

Crimson letters scrawled themselves across the inky darkness.

*Suddenly, the exciting and charismatic Elrod, the last — ah say — the last ruler of Melvinbone, stepped forward into the Papal Audience Chamber. 'Son,' he opined, 'ah don't mean to tell you your business, but you look about as healthy as a . . .'*

The letters faded from crimson to a rust brown and then seemed to sink into the very blackness itself.

The cover dimmed from a brilliant emerald and turquoise to a muddy olive and navy.

And then it, too, was gone.

A small flame flared to life a few feet to the left of the reader. The flame rose up at an angle to reveal the features of Viktor Davis, who was smiling. 'There's nothing out here,' he said. 'Not yet, anyway. Just an idea for the end of issue 183. The rest of *Mothers & Daughters.*' He lit his cigarette.

The flame went out.



*Where do you get your ideas?*

It's a curious sort of question, the question most commonly asked of the storyteller. *From observation* is a common response — but, of course, observation is a neutral act. A dozen storytellers could observe a single event and the stories that they based on that event would all be different. A non-storyteller could observe the same event and likely see nothing in it beyond the event itself. For the non-storyteller *where do you get your ideas?* is not an altogether different question from *where did you get that jacket?* or *who. cuts your hair?* At a specific level, small meaning can be read into the question: *I like your ideas. I would like some ideas like that. Where can I get them?* I think it was Spider Robinson who likened writing to hacking your way through dense undergrowth in search of The Filing Cabinet. Sometimes you can push through the foliage for days to no avail. At other times you just look up and there The Filing Cabinet is, in front of you. It's a nice piece of imagery but it fails to answer the question. Like most purported answers, it evades the question entirely:

***where did the filing cabinet come from?*** and the implicit subtext, ***where can I get a filing cabinet just like it?***

It's very common for a storyteller to say that an idea 'just came to me.' I don't think that's entirely accurate, given that the storyteller's craft is largely concerned with 'the invocation of things analogous': things that are like other things and the drawing of new connections between them.

*What's that like?*

To what is it comparable? With what, in the common range of human experience, can it be connected?

Kennedy's head wound was the Big Bang of the last half of the twentieth century. A short time later, he divides into four component elements: John, Paul, George and Ringo. Robert Kennedy is shot on June 5th and dies June 6th (6668: The Beast of the Apocalypse and the eighth Tarot card — Strength — pictorially represented as a woman calming a lion). *Or . . .*

The Beatles music compels (Prince) Charles Manson (Man-Son) to brutally murder Sharon Tate (sharing *tête;* ***tête*** is 'head' in French), a blonde actress, practically seven years to the day after the death of Marilyn Monroe (Moon Row). Edward Kennedy is implicated in the death of Mary Jo (Mary and Joseph) Kopechne even as Apollo 11 (the Sun God, two magicians) speeds towards the moon. All of this transpires within a couple of weeks in the summer of '69.

These are ideas.

I *could* say that they just came to me, but it would be more accurate to say that I went to *them.* Ideas — and new connections between ideas — lead you away from commonly held perceptions of reality.

Ideas lead you out here. Ideas lead you into the darkness.

In psychiatric terms, this is called schizophrenia: the inability to differentiate between reality and fantasy. For sixteen years, I've been following ideas — and the connections between ideas — further into the darkness, because that's where the ideas are. The further I've gone, the less real conventional reality has seemed to me. A diagnosis of genuine schizophrenia results when fantasy intrudes upon reality to such an extent that the patient is unable to function in the 'real' world. I put the quotes in there because I have to; I defy anyone to come up with a valid working definition of the real world — let alone the 'Real World' or the Real World — which is genuinely objective. Family Values? Feminism? The Ku Klux Klan? Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch? Time-Warner? The New York Stock Exchange? The Royal Family? Assuming (for the sake of argument) that I'm crazy and everyone else is sane, what genuine, verifiable, objectively *real* foundation is your sanity based on? What, objectively speaking (or subjectively, if we're being honest here), lends that foundation validity? The thing which lends validity to my schizophrenia (I was diagnosed as a 'borderline schizophrenic' in 1979 and I think it reasonable to assume that the condition has 'worsened' in the interim) is the fact that I can make a living from it. In a capitalistic society founded upon 'choice' as an absolute, that gives me a certain 'real' world impunity. If the world of Cerebus, of Estarcion, is not real to *me,* then I can't make it real for *you.* If that condition persists, becomes chronic, the flow of currency is shut off and I become just another candidate for a Prozac prescription. I spend about twelve hours a day in the fictional world I've created, eight hours a day sleeping and approximately four hours a day interacting with the 'real' world. Believe me, those quotation marks *have* to be there.

This is my autobiography. This is as accurate a word picture as I can paint for you of who I am. There is very little regurgitation of past experiences. No boy-meets-girl, boy-gets-girl, boy-ditches/is-ditched-by-girl, no blow-by-blow account of the School Years, the Freelance Years, the Marriage, the Mistress, the Divorce, the Affairs. To document all of these, to pass them off as Truth (or 'Truth' or truth or 'truth'), would strike me as having about as much validity as doing an in-depth examination of the life of the tree (from seed to sapling to lumber mill) from which was carved the hockey stick used by Wayne Gretzky to break Gordie Howe's record.

*Let me take you down*
*'Cause I'm going to*
*Strawberry Fields.*
*Nothing is real . . .*

John Lennon
'Strawberry Fields Forever'

The reader was suddenly aware that they — the reader and Viktor Davis — were moving. So intent had been the reader's focus upon the orange (and intermittently red) dot which

was the tip of Viktor Davis' cigarette (or was it?) that a spider web of traces had burned itself into the reader's retinae: endeavouring, it seemed, to capture or (at least) restrain the small, bobbing spot of illumination. It was not until the *squeak squeak squeak* sound of Viktor Davis' sneakers and the sensation of the reader's legs moving rose (simultaneously) within the reader's consciousness that realisation came: and with it an implied question. How long had they been walking?

Viktor Davis laughed.

The sound was not reassuring.

Quite a while. Quite a while. For some of you five years, ten years, sixteen years.

One word, one picture at a time, I'm leading you into the darkness. Not *out* of the darkness. *Into* the darkness. You could say that I have control. You could say that you have control. At any time, you could put this comic book down and go and watch television or wash your hair or something. You could decide never to buy another issue.

There was a very good review of Steve Bissette's *Taboo* anthology that came out a while ago entitled 'Don't Read This'. That's very good, don't you think? Don't read this. If you stop reading, you have control. If you keep reading, I have control.

Don't read this.

Elvis Presley died on the anniversary of Madonna's birth.

Elvis' mother had died on the same day, at the same age Elvis would die some years later: forty-two.

What does that mean? It means a great deal to me (certainly a good deal more than what passed for news in the paper I read this morning). I see great significance in those three events taking place on the same day. What is the significance? Uh-uh. Doesn't work that way. What does it mean to *you?* Just a coincidence? I see. Of course, you know the word 'coincidence' is not an explanation.

*Question: Why did those three events take place on August 16?*

*Answer: Those three events took place on August 16.*

Removing the word 'why' from a question does not change a question into an answer. Not for me, anyway.

Not out here.

1977.

That was the year that Elvis died; it was the year Groucho and Charlie Chaplin died as well. It was the year the Voyager spacecraft was launched.

Into the darkness.

Some years later, the Voyager spacecraft accomplished its flyby of the planet Saturn. The pictures transmitted back to Earth were extraordinary (I used to be quite an astronomy nut. Did I ever tell you that? No, I didn't think so). I remember the close-up of the Rings. Thousands and thousands of Rings. I remember the stir it caused at Johnson Space Center when one of the pictures showed several of the Rings were braided.

*Saturn's saying 'hello'.*

It was a voice in my head that was not my own.

*Saturn's saying 'hello' to the DNA.*

The reader stumbled as the ground shifted, suddenly, beneath the reader's feet. There had been some kind of impediment and then a shallow crater or a pothole. One, two, three awkward steps and the reader had recovered a semblance of balance. In the distance, Viktor Davis' cigarette was motionless, glowing at the reader's eye level. The reader paused a moment and then stepped (this time more carefully) in the direction of the glowing orange dot.

The orange dot resumed its journey.

Word by word. Picture by picture. Into the darkness. I remember Zolastraya saying to me in a peak moment of frustration, 'According to you, everything is shit. Nothing is worthwhile.' Various women have said the same thing to me at various times, under various circumstances and in various ways.

It's certainly not the way that I feel. It's not what I think.

Everything isn't shit. Everything is everything.

Worthwhile?

Worth a while? This cigarette is worth a while. Beer is worth a while. Sex is ***definitely*** worth a while. But how long is a while? Several minutes? An hour? Three weeks? A year and a half?

A lifetime?

Worthwhile.

*squeak squeak squeak*

December 8, 1980, at approximately 11:20 p.m., Viktor Davis had been sitting at his drawing board, hard at work on the twenty-fourth issue of *Cerebus*. Less than a year before, he had announced for the first time that the story line would run three hundred issues. He was in the middle of lettering 'Blinky Boar and the Strawberry Patch' and humming 'Strawberry Fields Forever' to himself when the local radio station interrupted its programming for a news bulletin.

'Possibilities for a Beatles reunion were dashed at eleven o'clock tonight when John Lennon was shot to death outside his Manhattan apartment building . . .'

That night, Viktor Davis decided that *Cerebus* would not run for three hundred issues. He decided that *Cerebus* would run for two hundred issues. Viktor Davis decided to keep this a secret, telling no one for fourteen years.

He would not announce it until issue one hundred and eighty-three, a year and five months before the end: November 1995.

The reader felt the ground become unstable, felt it wobble uncertainly like a table with four legs of different lengths. Instinctively, the reader took several tentative steps in the direction of the orange dot, the lone definable fixture in the hard and stygian darkness of the reader's reality. With each step, the ground began to tilt further and further forward. The air temperature dropped several degrees as the reader's arms pin-wheeled ineffectively. At last, the angle of the ground had slipped so far out of the horizontal that the reader was pitched forward, headlong into the blackness.

The reader's hands braced for the impact.

When it came, a moment later, the surface that was struck seemed strangely elastic in its nature, almost trampoline-like. The reader's hands and knees impressed themselves into it to a depth of several inches. This new surface began to change its texture. Solidity (of a kind) began to reassert itself. The elasticity was gone, replaced by a nearly impossible smoothness, as if the (ground? floor?) were a frictionless surface. Through the nerve endings in the reader's palms, no sensation could be perceived. They seemed to rest on a film of fine oil or a layer of powder which began to vibrate strangely, rhythmically, rocking the reader back and forth in place. Then the surface began to tilt forward and the reader could feel that the reader's hands were now noticeably lower than were the reader's feet. Blood began to rush to the reader's head and the sound of the reader's heartbeat, even as it quickened its tempo, became audible. The reader began to slide. The reader began to slide headfirst into the darkness, into the unknown.

Instinctively, the reader endeavoured to swing around, to bring legs and feet forward, but there was no purchase to be had. As the angle of the surface steepened, the reader began to accelerate. A dozen yards, a hundred, two hundred. Faster and still faster. The reader's mouth and throat went dry.

The surface dropped away beneath the reader and now the reader was airborne, hurtling through the darkness, dropping like a stone at a velocity of thirty-two feet per second per second. Falling. Falling.

The reader struck something, a new surface, a new ground, a new reality. The reader's momentum carried the reader forward, straining against this new surface which was dense, but resilient. The surface curved up and away, centrifugal force pressing the reader hard against it, squeezing the reader's breath from the reader's lungs. The surface levelled out and the reader gulped air as the sound of the reader's own heartbeat, impossibly fast, a trip-hammer staccato, grew to a deafening loudness in the reader's ears. The surface rose in a gentle curve, carrying the reader with it until the reader could feel a sense of weightlessness taking hold. And then the surface fell away again, dropping precipitously into the blackness. The surface arched up and then down, up and then down beneath the reader. Falling away and then impacting, falling away and then impacting, until the reader felt like a rubber ball bouncing from wave to wave.

Gradually, the surface ceased its punishing wave-like motion.

The surface seemed to rise beneath the reader's hands and settle beneath the reader's feet.

Almost imperceptibly, over several seconds, the reader's forward momentum slowed. The lubrication beneath the reader's hands became thinner in spots. With the re-emergence of texture came friction. The reader felt a raw warmth tearing at the

reader's palms, small bits of skin stripping away. The surface became less elastic and the reader could feel the relentless tug of gravity, moving down from head to shoulders to chest to abdomen and, finally, along the full length of the reader's body.

The reader slid to a complete stop.

For some minutes, the reader lay prone. The reader's chest ached as the reader convulsively drew ragged breath upon ragged breath. The reader coughed involuntarily, the reader's body attempting to heave phlegm upwards from the throat, endeavouring to replace the long-absent saliva. The saliva returned, bit by bit, mixing with the acrid coppery taste of the phlegm. Lungs, throat and heart seemed locked in a bitter struggle for dominance. The reader swallowed and the lungs clenched painfully at the absence of oxygen. The sound of the reader's heart retreated reluctantly from the shoreline of the reader's ears. As the reader rose up to a kneeling position, the reader's knees and elbows undulated, vibrated, as they began to experience adrenaline withdrawal. The reader was bathed in sweat, which poured in thin streams along the reader's spine, rib cage and throat. With one trembling forearm, the reader wiped at the perspiration now pooling around the reader's eyes.

It seemed like an eternity until the reader's breathing subsided. It seemed still longer until the rubbery feeling departed from the reader's joints.

Suddenly, there was light in the darkness.

It was a rectangle of illumination, slightly below the reader's eye level, as if some kind of trap door had opened some yards away.

No, not a trap door. It was a light-table. Or a video game, lit from within by a pale radiance that was almost golden, almost orange, almost red. The reader rose unsteadily to a standing posture. The tops of miniature marble columns were visible from the higher vantage point, but not much else.

*squeak squeak squeak*

The figure of Viktor Davis emerged from the darkness on the opposite side of the rectangle, stepping forward until he stood above the (table? game?). He gazed down into it for a period of several seconds, his features inscrutable.

He looked up at the reader and smiled, the underlighting lending his face a strange and malevolent aspect which even the pale blueness of his eyes could not completely belie.

'I was just kidding,' he said. '*Cerebus* goes to issue three hundred. Just like I've always said. March 2004.'

The reader and Viktor Davis regarded one another for several minutes, without speaking, across the strange, lighted rectangle. Calmly, Viktor Davis withdrew his pack of cigarettes from his hip pocket and selected one. Raising the lighter in his right hand, he lit the cigarette in a quick, easy motion.

'What's the matter?' he asked, still smiling through a dissipating cloud of smoke.

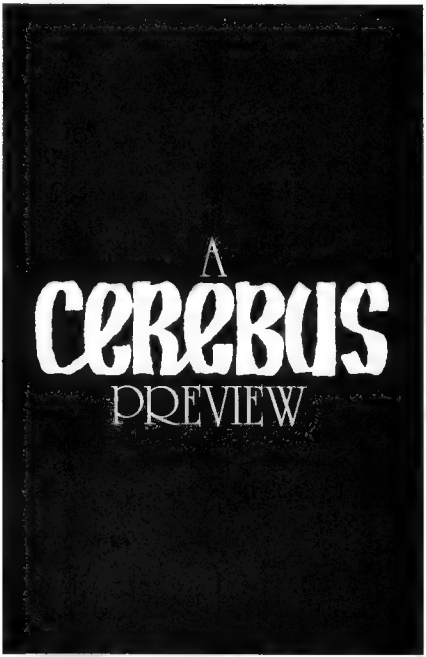
'Don't you trust me?'

He bent forward slightly, stray locks of hair falling forward as he peered into the wan (now nearly colourless) illumination. He took a drag from his cigarette.

'Bang,' said Viktor Davis, in the same conversational tone with which he had addressed the reader, a small burst of cigarette smoke serving as a kind of punctuation.

'Bang, bang, bang,' he added.

The light went out.



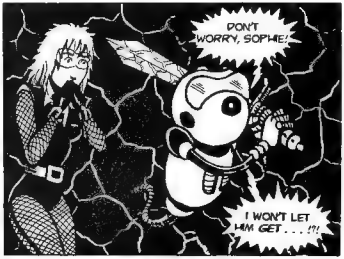

I've mentioned *Strange Attractions* before in the Note From the President column. I used it as an example of a book that just arrived out of nowhere and genuinely caught my attention, largely because it had an interesting story, above average artwork and when I got to the end of the first issue I wanted to know what happened next. I'll admit that at the time, I thought the possibilities of a second issue were remote at best. When I met the guys responsible at a convention, I told them if they made it to issue four, I would do a preview (I didn't want all you *Cerebus* fans left hanging if *Strange Attractors* didn't 'make the cut' — bad enough that *I* would never find out what happened to Roshi, Pirate Peg, Sophie and the rest of them). Well, waddayaknow? I'm typing this with an open copy of *Strange Attractors* 4 sitting beside me. Michael Cohen's art has improved by leaps and bounds. Mark Sherman's lettering is eminently readable and complimentary and the story by Mark Sherman and Michael Cohen moves along at a very nice pace. The first four issues are available from: RetroGrafix, 2130 Williams St. #3, Bellingham, Washington for $2.50 US (please include $1.00 shipping and handling it says here).

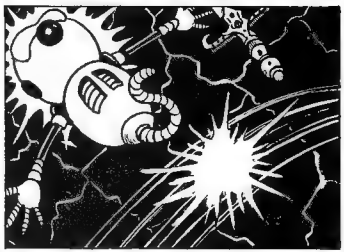
Ladies & Gentlemen, a real *Spicy Space Stories* (the comic book within the comic book) favourite of mine: *Strange Attractors.*

WHAT WAS THAT?
SHREEEEEK!
PUNY MORTALS!
BEHOLD THE WRATH OF SYNTAAR!
EEP!
I AM SENT THAT THE LAW OF MY MISTRESS MAY BE ESTABLISHED UNTO THE AEON!

STAND BACK, KIDS!
LET A PROFESSIONAL HANDLE THIS!

SURRENDER TO JUDGEMENT, PIRATE PEG!


DON'T WORRY, SOPHIE!
I WON'T LET HIM GET...!?!

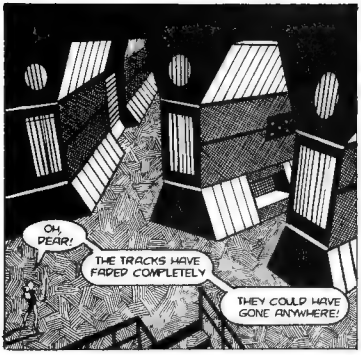


THUS COMETH JUDGMENT TO THE ENEMIES OF MY MISTRESS!
SOPHIE . . . THE COLLECTOR . . .
WAIT!
STOP!
ROSHI, ARE YOU . . .
ALRIGHT?
I (ZZKLK!) FEEL A LITTLE (POP!) SILLY!
I GUESS (BZZZZ!) I LET . . . (SKRRK!) YOU DOWN!
STOP IT, ROSHI!
NO ONE COULD HAVE STOPPED THAT MONSTER!
DO YOU HEAR ME! NO ONE!
I DON'T (GRIND! GRIND!) MEAN THAT, SOPHIE! I GUESS (SHRIKKK!) I'VE BEEN A LITTLE JUDGMENTAL LATELY
WHAT WITH TRYING TO BE YOUR THERAPIST AND (SKRRKK!) ALL . . .
(BZZZ!) SEEMS SO UNIMPORTANT NOW THAT I MAY NOT . . . WELL, I JUST WANT (ZZZZK!) YOU TO KNOW . . .

THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS . . . I SUPPOSE I WAS PRETTY OBNOXIOUS THERE FOR AWHILE (CRACKLE!)
I ALWAYS (SKKKRK!) THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEONE SPECIAL, VERY SPECIAL . . .
MY CPU WILL GO OFFLINE SOON, AND I JUST HAD TO LET YOU KNOW HOW I FELT, SOPHIE! (SIZZZRR!) I JUST NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD END LIKE THIS . . .
I ALWAYS THOUGHT WE'D GROW OLD (BZZZ! SHIZZZZZZLLL!) TOGETHER CATALOGUING ROOMS IN THE MUSEUM!
HUSH, ROSH!
YOU REALLY HAVE TO HUSH!
YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE. WE'RE GOING TO BE FINE!
OH, DEAR!
WE'VE GOT TO HELP PEG SOMEHOW . . . AND WIDOW AND
SCHLLLUUUURRPPP!
WHAT?
WHAT WOULD NURSE NEBULA DO?

SPARE QWYRF, HYPER-COGITATOR, AND I WILL SUFFER YOUR JUDGMENT IN HIS PLACE!
DON'T DESPAIR, DEAR NICHOLAS, I'M COMING TO SAVE YOU!
STAND ASIDE! THESE PLAGUE VICTIMS MUST BE TAKEN TO THE MEDICORP OUTPOST BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
UNLESS I RISK MADNESS AND PARALYSIS AT THE HANDS OF THE MANTOIDS NICHOLAS QUARK WILL DIE!

WELL, THERE'S NO GOING BACK, THAT'S FOR SURE!
C'MON, ROSH, WE NEED TO GET YOU HELP--PRONTO!! AND WE'VE GOT TO FIX THE SHIP! SOMEHOW!
LET'S GO RESCUE PIRATE PEG!
SKKKK! ZZZZZ! (GRAINDD!)
I'D RATHER NOT BE DOING THIS!
BUT THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.
IS THERE?
YOUR SWORD, ROSH! IT'S GLOWING!
GOOD THING, TOO!
AS IT IS, I CAN BARELY MAKE OUT SYNTAAR'S TRACKS!
WHEW, SO MANY TWISTS AND TURNS! I'D SURE HATE TO GET LOST DOWN HERE!
ZZZ! (FZZZ) TCH! TCH!


OH, DEAR!
THE TRACKS HAVE FADED COMPLETELY
THEY COULD HAVE GONE ANYWHERE!

WHAT'S THAT?

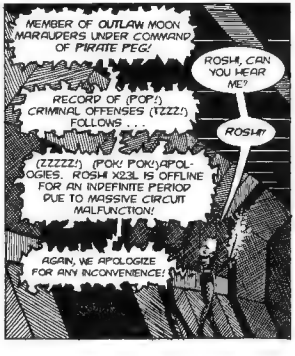
LOOK, ROSH! IT'S ONE OF PEG'S FORTUNE TELLING CARDS . . . THEY MUST HAVE GONE THIS WAY!

THE COLLECTOR

(SIZZLE! POP!) THE COLLECTOR! (THOCK!) UNIVERSAL DIGITAL REFERENCE 41X/34-8!
SCAN(WHHHRRRR!)NING . . . REFERENCE CRIME SUBREFERENCE CRIMINAL SOCIETIES (KOP! KOP!)
REFERENCE LOCATED: MOON MARAUDERS

ROSH! ARE YOU . . . ALL RIGHT?
ROSH! X23L IS PRESENTLY (SNICK! ZIZZZ!) OFFLINE PROCESSING (CRZZZZ!) YOUR QUERY FOR DATA!
WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE (THOK! TRZZZZ!) INCONVENIENCE!
DOWNED CIRCUITS ARE . . .

FOUND: SHOSHANA RABELBERG AKA THE COLLECTOR!
DATE OF BIRTH: UNKNOWN PARENTS: UNKNOWN
72% PROBABILITY BORN IN ENOCH (SHZZ! TK! TK!) MINING COLLECTIVE ON SHEKINAH . . .

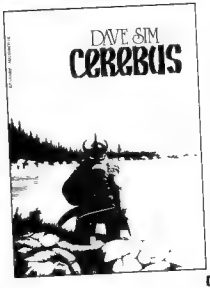

MEMBER OF OUTLAW MOON MARAUDERS UNDER COMMAND OF PIRATE PEG!
RECORD OF (POP!) CRIMINAL OFFENSES (YZZZ!) FOLLOWS . . .
(ZZZZZ!) (POK! POK!) APOLOGIES. ROSH! X23L IS OFFLINE FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD DUE TO MASSIVE CIRCUIT MALFUNCTION!
AGAIN, WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE!
ROSH!, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
ROSH!

HANG ON, ROSH!
I'M GOING TO GET YOU TO HELP AS SOON AS I CAN!

LOOK, ROSH!
THAT'S THE SYMBOL WE SAW ON THE ROOF OF THE COLLECTOR'S CITADEL!
THIS HEXPAD MUST OPEN THE DOOR. SWITARRR MUST HAVE GONE THIS WAY!
WOSH! THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO FIGURE THAT OUT!
THIS LADDER LOOKS LIKE OUR ONLY WAY ACROSS!
WANG ON! THERE'S JUST GOT TO BE A WAY TO THE SURFACE!
?

BOY, THIS PLACE IS VERY STRANGE!
ROSHI, YOU JUST GET COMFORTABLE.
I NEED TO MOVE FAST AND FIND THE COLLECTOR!
APOLOGIES, ROSHI X23L IS OFFLINE DUE TO MASSIVE CIRCUIT MALFUNCTION!
AGAIN, WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE!
IF MESON WERE WERE HERE I'D . . I'D
THIS IS ALL HIS FAULT ANYWAY! NONE OF THIS WOULD BE HAPPENING IF . . .
SSSOP-H-H-I-E!
SSS-S-SOPHIE!

# CEREBUS: THE FIRST HALF

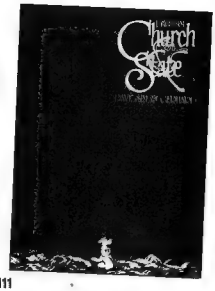



**CEREBUS reprints Cerebus 1 to 25**
**500 pages $25**

The Cerebus volume introduces the cast of characters including Elrod the Albino, Red Sophia, Jaka, the Cockroach (later Captain Cockroach with Elrod as Bunky the Albino), Lord Julius, President Weisshaupt and many more.

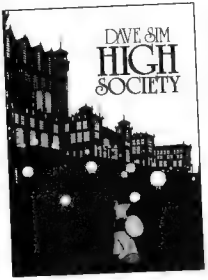
**HIGH SOCIETY reprints Cerebus 26 to 50**
**500 pages $25**

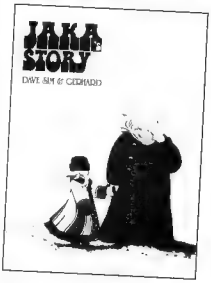
Cerebus gets swept up into the world of high power politics in Iest and runs for Prime Minister. Introduces Astoria, Filgate, Blakely, the Regency Elf, Dirty Fleagle and his brother Dirty Drew McGrew, Duke Leonardi The Roach becomes Moon Roach and Sergeant Preston of the Royal Mounted Iestan police




**CHURCH & STATE Vol. I & II reprints Cerebus 52 to 111**
**1200 pages $30 ea.**

One of the longest single stories in the history of comics Manipulated by President Weisshaupt, Cerebus finds himself married and then finds himself as Pope of the Eastern Church! Introduces Mrs. Henrot-Gutch (Cerebus' mother-in-law), Boobah, Bear, Bishop Powers, Bishop Posey, Mick and Keef and many more. The Roach becomes Wolveroach and the Secret Sacred Wars Roach. Also, in volume II, is the Flaming Carrot cross-over



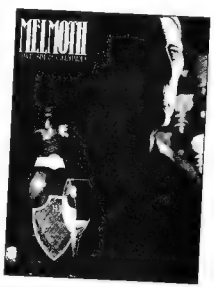




**JAKA'S STORY reprints Cerebus 114 to 136**
**500 pages $25**

Cerebus returns to find his life in ruins and ends up as a houseguest of the love of his life, Jaka, and her new husband Rick. Introduces Oscar the poet, Pud, the tavern-owner, and Mrs. Thatcher.

**MELMOTH reprints Cerebus 139 to 150**
**250 pages $17**

Cerebus, mistakenly believing that Jaka is dead, takes up residence in Dino's Cafe, clutching Jaka's childhood doll, Missy and his sword The other half of the story is a faithful retelling of the last days of Oscar Wilde The Roach becomes normalroach. Introduces Doris, Dino, Janice, Robbie and Reggie Cameo appearances by Mick and Keef.

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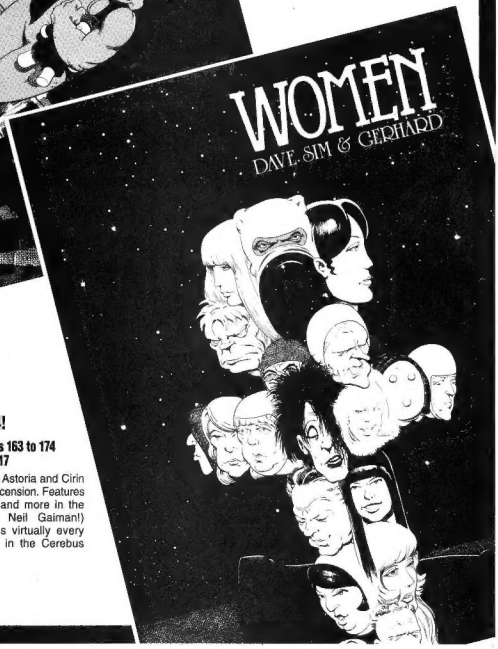
# THE SECOND HALF BEGINS HERE

**FLIGHT reprints Cerebus 151 to 162**
**250 pages $17**

Cerebus explodes into action in the second half of the 300 issue story-line. Trapped in lest, hunted by the Ciriniists, Cerebus battles back. Featuring Punisherroach as well as the unexpected reappearance of many early Cerebus characters, including the first (visual) appearance of Suenteus Po!




**NEW IN '94!**

**WOMEN reprints Cerebus 163 to 174**
**250 pages $17**

The second half continues as Astoria and Cirin contend for the fabled Final Ascension. Features Swoon, Snuff, Sleaze, Sulk and more in the highly-acclaimed (even by Neil Gaiman!) Sandman parody, as well as virtually every female character introduced in the Cerebus storyline to date.

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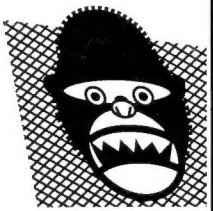

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photo by Gerhard

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS SELF-PUBLISHERS Jeff Smith, creator of the wildly successful *Bone* enthuses, '. . . and Dark Horse Comics — *The* Dark Horse Comics is doing a *Bone* sculpture and *Hero Illustrated* just did this *Bone Holiday Special* which everyone just, you know, looved. And *Bone* is being reprinted in *Disney Adventures* — I mean, *The Disney Adventures*. And the *Bone* trading card set outsold the *Beavis & Butthead* trading card set and I did a *Bone* trading card for the *Madman* trading card set that is sooo cool. And I won for 'Best Humor Comic' in the Eisner Awards last year *AND* I won the Russ Manning Award for Most Promising New Talent. *Me*. Jeff Smith.' Dave Sim, creator of *Cerebus* removes the straw from his large Diet Coke in preparation for what will soon come to be known as 'That San Juan *Burger King* Incident.'